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Presented in this article is an outline of some of the special interest course work included in the curriculum guidelines being developed in the Atlanta Public Schools System for advanced secondary school French classes. Titles of the audiolingually-oriented courses described are--(1) "Teenagers and Teenage Life in France Today." (2) "The Arts in France Today." (3) "French Politics and Professions." (4) "The New France." (5) "The French Approach to Life." and (6) "Je Parle Francais." Suggestions for language laboratory use and testing at the advanced levels are offered in conclusion. (AF)

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FRENCH ON THE ADVANCED LEVEL

During the past decade government and private agencies have given research and financial support chiefly to the teaching of beginning languages; and school administrators and language teachers accordingly devoted a greater part of their effort to the elementary stages. But little study was applied to intermediate and advanced courses. In these years, however, one generally accepted concept concerning the upper levels of language study has evolved. Language teachers now feel it is more beneficial to study one language for an extended period, rather than the traditional two years of a classical language followed by two years of a modern language. For this reason students in the college preparatory curriculum are urged to study three, four, or sometimes even five years of a language.

Students entering a third-year language course may find themselves continuing (for as much as six months) the same pursuits they had followed in the second year--conversations and stories to increase their speaking and reading abilities. The next stage of study presents problems, because research findings are too scanty to determine how best to fulfill the needs of the advanced student. Often at the fourth- and fifth-year levels the material is unappetizing to the high school student, who becomes quickly bored and loses interest. The teacher too frequently works from a disadvantage, because she has not had sufficient experience with advanced courses to tap the few available sources of suitable books, films, and tapes. Nor is this her only frustration; since the mortality rate in advanced language classes is high, the teacher is also often faced with the deadly combination of different-level students merged into one class. In my first year I taught a combined class of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-year students.

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These students are usually juniors and seniors in high school. But there is a possibility that younger students will soon enroll in upper-level

language courses. Their preparation for advanced courses will come from some sort of elementary school language training such as the increasingly popular F.L.E.S. programs, though current studies are trying to determine the ultimate value in time and money of F.L.E.S. As teaching methods and materials improve at the elementary level, however, a greater number of students will enter high school with the equivalent of one or two years of language preparation. The prospect of a class comprised of 14-to-18-year-old students presents further problems, for the variety of interest and the level of maturity would most assuredly differ from those of a more homogeneous age group.

With these considerations in mind the Atlanta Public Schools have begun to set up a workable curriculum for advanced language classes in the secondary schools. Two years of work by the Curriculum Committee have produced promising results. Guidelines for courses of minimal standards use readily available materials and suggest a variety of supplementary activities. The following outline presents some of the course work. It will, hopefully, be beneficial to teachers and prompt further suggestions for improving the guides. As a teacher of French, I can speak only of the French curriculum, but committees are working to implement similar studies made in German, Latin, Russian, and Spanish.

Assuming a two-to-three-year sequence of language in the elementary stages, the committee set up a maximum of three years of advanced course work. These three years are divided into three quarters each. A quarter lasts eleven to twelve weeks. The nine quarters of advanced work may be taken sequentially or non-sequentially depending on the needs or desires of the students. The courses center around special-interest topics not necessarily related, except that all are designed to improve ability in the language.

In the Atlanta system, the Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston text has been selected for eventual uniform use in the first two levels. Advanced

courses, however, will utilize the resources of many companies. One such course is entitled "Teenagers and Teenage Life in France Today." Fifteen articles selected from the Holt book, *Lire, Parler, et Ecrire,* underly the theme of the teenager in all facets of his life. Each chapter of this text is designed in the format of a newspaper, and most of the articles are more journalistic than literary. A series of exercises involving debates and discussions permits variety and can add spark to a class. Although this particular text is high in interest value, the vocabulary is technical and difficult.

Another course, "The Arts in France Today" also utilizes the Holt text. *Le Bal des Voleurs,* a comedy-ballet by Jean Anouilh, comprises the main work, but supplementary materials or activities may be centered around music or painting in a class with a lively interest in the arts. Some students enjoy studying French musicians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Debussy and Ravel are two favorites. Others enjoy French painting, particularly the Impressionist period, represented by Renoir, Van Gogh, and Cezanne.

"French Politics and Professions," a third course in the sequence, studies through mass media the trades and professions in France and the structure of the French government, a topic of particular interest in the light of last year's riots and this year's reforms. The section on French politics utilizes the Heath book, *Petit Miroir de la Civilization Francaise* and its sequel *Image de la France*. The Harcourt, Brace and World *Audio-Lingual Method French Level III* contains excellent articles from *Realites* and *L'Express* which deal with the trades and professions and the structure drills and tapes for these readings are easily adaptable. A rebroadcast from the famous "Journal Parle du Soir" is included, a program as well known to Frenchmen as Huntley and Brinkley are to Americans.

For the section on French politics, each student does not necessarily

need a separate text. Current periodicals and magazines offer a wealth of material and two other books, Harcourt's *Chez les francais* and McGraw-Hill's *La France: Une Tapisserie*, contain items of interest.

"The New France" course is a study of French life from the forties to the present, emphasizing the activities of The Resistance during World War II. *ALM Level IV*, the basic text, covers the lives of the social classes, especially the *petit bourgeois* and the *vieil aristocrat du chateau*. "Aspects du caractère français," a long, tedious article by André Siegfried, the French economist, might well be omitted.

The especially interesting selections about The Resistance are taken from the London radio broadcasts of DeGaulle and Joseph Kessel's book, *L'Armee des Ombres*, which describes the beginnings of The Resistance and its underground activities. During this course my class went to see the French movie, *The Two of Us*, which describes wartime France, and one of the television stations showed *Is Paris Burning?*. One problem in this course is maintaining objectivity among the students on such an emotionally charged topic.

The fifth course, "The French Approach to Life," studies the France of Gallic values, using tableaux one, five, eight, and twelve of the McGraw-Hill text, *La France: Une Tapisserie* and André Siegfried's article in the *ALM Level IV* book. Having never taught this course, I am unable to pass judgment on its merits. The course is an outgrowth of the curriculum committee's deliberations.

Finally, "Je Parle Français" is an introductory course to France, based on the Encyclopedia Britannica film series. This course has proved to be one of the most enjoyable. Using twenty of the hundred-and-twenty films and tapes in the series, the course follows an American girl's visit to France to see relatives and travel throughout the country. With her uncle she visits Normandy, Britanny, Orleans, Paris, Alsace and Lorraine, and Provence. I usually present one or two of the first films as an introduction to the characters and to their itinerary in France.

Then I begin the actual tour, presenting films which seem the most interesting and beneficial. Spending two or three days on each film and using the tapes, I hand out the written script only on the second or third day. At the end of three or four films the students, pretending they are travelling in France, usually write letters to someone back home, telling about their adventures.

After finishing the films, students participate in panel discussions on the topics they have covered--scenes, monuments, places, etc. Three or four students research the topic and discuss it before the class. At midterm and at the end of the course, we have a ten-minute conversation between two students, with one taking the part of a student newly returned from France. The conversations are largely extemporaneous, because I call students at random and tell them which parts they are to play at test time.

At this point I should make clear that French is the means of communication in all of these courses: the students and I speak only in French. Obviously, problems will arise, especially when comprehension breaks down in the readings and films. The quickest remedy is simply to answer the question in English and continue the lesson. If a student simply does not understand, it is easier to say "cela veut dire" and give him the answer in English. Much time is wasted by teachers who try to make a student understand a difficult vocabulary and a complex thought at the same time. At this stage the readings are thought provoking and the difficulties facing both student and teacher require a flexible attitude.

As far as the use of the language laboratory is concerned, the primary considerations are its accessibility and its reliability. If the school has a language laboratory *in good condition,* by all means use it. However, the necessity of using the laboratory at this point is not nearly as acute as at the earlier level. In most schools this

means that the advanced level will have to consider greater use of the tape recorder and the record player. Most of the texts mentioned in the course outlines have accompanying tapes. The ALM and Britannica are particularly good.

The final problem in the advanced levels is testing. Esactly how and what to test is a vexing problem for most teachers. Many of the publishing companies give little criteria for performance. The entire matter of testing is left to the teacher. With or without the publisher's tests the teacher is always free, of course, to devise her own means for checking students' work, but official tests which accompany teaching materials give the teacher some indication of how much should be accomplished. In preparing tests for these courses it would be profitable to use debates and panels, as well as discussion-essay questions. It also would be good to limit the answers to essay questions in order to facilitate correcting. Two grades of equal importance should be given on the written work--one on grammar and one on content. The same emphasis should be put on thought as on syntax. At some time in the fourth or fifth year of study, students' extemporaneous conversation ability should be tested. That is, a student should be able to prepare to speak on a topic to another student without having practiced with him previously, as was outlined under the course study of the Encyclopedia Britannica film series. By the final two courses students should be able to maintain an intelligent conversation on given topics for at least ten minutes.

These are a few suggestions to teachers of advanced French. Since I am a French teacher, I have of necessity limited myself to an outline of my own discipline. But I hope we are entering a decade of development and improvement for all foreign languages on the advanced level.

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